





Preschool Classroom Strategies & Ideas for Students with Hearing Loss

- “U” seating arrangement (when practical) with the student with hearing loss sitting at the top of the curve of the U is best practice for preferential seating. A circle works too.
- When working on listening skills with the child, try sitting next to student to challenge him/her by reducing visual cues from speechreading and having student focus on listening. If you are using FM, be sure that you have correct mic placement. If no FM is being used, speak at the child’s ear level and as close to the hearing aid or cochlear implant as possible (about 6 – 8 inches away is ideal).
- Because little ones are still learning to listen, they may not report or even recognize problems with their amplification. Batteries, for example, can go dead. Train a few staff members as troubleshooters to perform a daily listening check to catch and fix problems with amplification or to troubleshoot with an expert via the phone.
- Do not assume your student with hearing loss has your auditory attention. Call student’s name (several times may be needed depending on noise level and listening experience), or use attention getting gestures, and wait for eye contact before you begin your interaction.
- Your student with hearing loss is at risk for missing incidental information and details embedded in the message. Check often for comprehension by asking lots of Wh questions. (e.g. What color crayon are you supposed to use?) When you think your student can handle it, change one facet of your routine instruction to determine if your student with hearing loss noticed the novel information (e.g. Usually your directions state, “Line-up at the door.” Change the directions to, “Line-up at the water fountain.”)
- Children with hearing loss often need extra input to understand the thoughts and feelings of others. Use language like, “He’s thinking that...” and “She feels _____ because...” to help your students with inferential thinking and point of view.
- One of the important bits of incidental knowledge that your student with hearing loss may miss is the names/name signs of classmates and staff. Students may need an individual lessons to learn these names. Perhaps make a picture book of all the students to have as a classroom book that you can refer to often.
- The child with hearing loss may require more time to absorb and process language than typically hearing peers. Give a little extra time for processing and response. If it is clear that the child did not understand- rephrase, rather than repeat- the information.
- An opportunity to practice listening: Let the child with hearing loss rely on his hearing when you give directions. When initially giving directions, make sure you do not use visual cues such as pointing or gesturing. As stated previously, give plenty of processing time. Add visual cues only if it is apparent that a rephrase did not result in a correct response.
- To reduce background noise and reverberation, use carpet, curtains and other soft, sound absorbing items in the classroom. Noise bounces off hard surfaces.
- Talk naturally - not too loudly or with over-articulated words. Use complete phrases and sentences (NOT, “Come-tie shoe.” but rather, “Come here and let me tie your shoe.”).

- Use acoustic highlighting: emphasizing key vocabulary by making the word a little louder or pausing in front of the word. This is a great way to naturally draw attention to the salient information.
- Require the child to use language. Make sure the child has the opportunity to attempt to verbally/sign request an object or an action. Don't try to predict what he wants and simply comply beforehand. Model the appropriate language, being aware that you may need to supply a label for his idea. Expect the child with hearing loss to repeat your model. Similarly, the language of negation (i.e. "I don't want chocolate milk. I want white milk instead.") may need to be modeled and then repeated by the child.
- Seize and expand language! When your student with hearing loss generates a short bit of language like, "Susie swing," model and expand a more appropriate version like, "Susie's swinging up high!" 
- Don't pretend to understand your student with hearing loss if you really don't. Work toward understanding by speaking educated guesses, but require the student to repeat the correct language after your model. Although getting needs met is a great motivator, it is important to not expect perfection at first. Require more accurate speech and language as the child progresses.
- When you can't understand your student because of misarticulation, give him a choice between the misarticulated version and the correct version of the single word. (e.g. Did you mean "horfe or horse?") Initially, the second choice should be the correct choice. When your student gets closer to the correct pronunciation, remind him that you can now understand exactly what he said.
- Songs, nursery rhymes and finger plays reinforce the natural prosody of speech. When new songs are introduced, demonstrate the song first without the music. Then while the recorded song is playing, sing into the FM microphone. Sending a copy of the words home for the family to practice is great reinforcement and could include signs to go along if needed. If you are singing several songs in a row, announce which song will be sung next so your student with hearing loss can be involved right from the beginning. Be aware that fast paced songs may be a challenge.
- Even pre-schoolers can take some responsibility for their hearing loss. Talk with parents and your educational consultant for students with hearing loss to determine whether your student should plug in the FM system at the end of the day, independently boot receiver to hearing aid, or find other ways to become "the boss of his hearing loss."
- Your student with hearing loss may lack the background information and/or vocabulary needed to understand the main idea or details of books read to the class. Having parents or school staff preview the concepts and vocabulary can help the student become connected to the story during your lesson.
- When reading, hold the book so that both it and your face can be seen straight on, not in profile, by your student with hearing loss. Be aware of your pace (slightly slower may be better at first) and the need for acoustic highlighting.
- When reading: show the picture first- then begin to read so the student can look at the picture details prior to placing attention on the teacher/interpreter. 
- To encourage conversation with peers, place the FM transmitter in the middle of the table during snack and other social times. Although, the mic will not be 6 inches from the students' mouths, it will be close enough to boost their voices above the background noise.

- If a student is showing and telling, either hold the top of the mic six inches from his mouth or appropriately clip the mic to his shirt.
- Be “Ms. Obvious” ...use everyday routines to introduce vocabulary and concepts. (e.g. “I see you hung your coat on the *hook*.”) Novel situations will also present the opportunity to develop language. (e.g. “That guy is called a *juggler*. He *juggles* the balls up in the air. What do you think he’s going to do with those apples? That’s right, he’s going to *juggle* them.”) NOTE: Italicized words indicate acoustic highlighting. Work toward eliminating acoustic highlighting in subsequent conversations about the same topic.
- Students with hearing loss often know the word for the whole item but may need more explicit teaching for the parts of the item (e.g. Your student knows “shirt” but needs to learn “cuff, collar, etc.”) Using lots of vivid verbs and precise nouns exposes your student to words he might not have been able to hear in overheard conversations but will be required to read in a later grade.
- Require your student with hearing loss to answer stereotypical questions (e.g. How are you today?) and to answer in choral response questions posed to the group (“Tell me class, what did the gingerbread man say?”).
- If your student with hearing loss is looking at other students or adults to determine what action he needs to take, he may be hearing but not comprehending. Although providing lots of visual clues may be necessary at first, if your student is working on listening skills, he must become less reliant on what he sees and more reliant on what he hears. Fade visual clues as soon as possible when focusing on listening and spoken language skills.
- Consider using a carrier phrase to cue students in: It is easier for your student to tune-in to auditory information after he hears a carrier phrase like “OK preschoolers/friends/class, let’s all”
- At times, use an “Auditory Sandwich” to promote listening. (1st presentation is verbal to ensure auditory processing, 2nd presentation of verbal prompt accompany with a tactile or visual cues as necessary, 3rd presentation of cue is auditory.)
- Direct instruction may be needed in language and behavior for scenarios that typically hearing students can easily overhear.
- Aided hearing is hard work. Whether the child uses hearing aids, cochlear implants, BAHA’s or any other hearing device, the device amplifies ALL sounds, not just the sound of voices. The child will hear the sound of a fan whirring in the classroom at THE SAME VOLUME as they hear your voice. Be aware of this when setting up your classroom, and when teaching. A sound that you naturally tune out will not only be a distraction, but will make hearing your voice that much harder for a child.

